A gender-transformative social accountability model

WORKING PAPER 2

World Vision

UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures

Water For Women

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Contents

Introduction

This Working Paper shares insights from the co-design of a gender-transformative social accountability model to be implemented by the 'Strengthening Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in WASH in Bangladesh' (SHOMOTA) project.

This Working Paper provides readers the opportunity to reflect on the value of integrating gender-transformative and social accountability approaches. We present key elements of the gender-transformative social accountability model, as well as next steps in implementing and refining this model. While we name this approach to social accountability "gender-transformative", it also considers transformation towards social inclusion.

The paper is intended for a broad audience of civil society organisations, government and donors working on or funding social accountability initiatives. This Working Paper will stimulate discussion on how social accountability practices in international development could be strengthened to support outcomes for gender-transformative change and social inclusion.

Background of the research

This Working Paper is part of a research award supported by the Water for Women Fund of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Water for Women is supporting improved health, equality and wellbeing in Asian and Pacific communities through socially inclusive and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects.

The research award is implemented through an academic-NGO partnership between: the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney (ISF-UTS); World Vision Bangladesh (WVB); World Vision Australia (WVA); and the University of Rajshahi (UoR). The research explores the contribution of social accountability to inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), with a focus on improving water service levels in rural Bangladesh. The research contributes to WVB's implementation of Citizen Voice and Action (CVA), a social accountability approach which mobilises and equips citizens to monitor and advocate for the improvement of government services.

The research is linked to the implementation of SHOMOTA, a civil society organisation (CSO) project also funded under the Water for Women Fund. Implemented by WVB, SHOMOTA is an integrated project incorporating water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), the empowerment of women and people with disabilities, and engagement with government and the private sector. The project's primary goal is to equip key stakeholders within sub-national governments, schools, businesses and community-based organisations (CBOs) to improve gender- and disability-inclusive WASH in schools and communities.

The research is being undertaken over three years (2018 to 2021). There are four phases of the research:

- **Phase 1** – Formative research comprising literature review, context assessment and case study of existing social accountability practice by WVB focused on WASH services.

- **Phase 2** – Lead and document the co-design and start-up of gender-transformative social accountability in SHOMOTA project sites.

- **Phase 3** – Lead reflective research of gender-transformative social accountability implementation by SHOMOTA project.

- **Phase 4** – Assess outcomes and promote learning on gender-transformative social accountability.

Across all 3 years, the research award seeks to catalyse sector dialogue on gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH.

This Working Paper relates to Phase 2 of the research award, in documenting the co-design of gender-transformative social accountability and establishing protocols of practice.[1]

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[1] At the time of writing this document, start-up in SHOMOTA project sites had not yet commenced.

Our research work to date to inform the model

The gender-transformative social accountability model described in this Working Paper is informed by several pieces of work completed by the research team in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research award.

We completed a literature review on gender-transformative change and social accountability[2] to establish the theoretical basis for the model. We explored 'gender-transformative change' as defined through gender studies literature and current and emerging development practice and considered the application of this thinking to social accountability.

We undertook a case study in USAID-funded Nobo Jatra Program (NJP), implemented by WVB. The case study was to learn from existing social accountability practice (CVA) to inform strengthened consideration of gender and social inclusion for CVA in SHOMOTA. NJP was chosen as the case study focus, since it provided an example of CVA focused on water and sanitation in rural Bangladesh. We recognised that whilst NJP included gender as a cross-cutting issue, NJP did not seek to be gender-transformative, and our research identified important lessons from its CVA activities. The Learning Report from this case study presents research findings and recommendations to strengthen gender and social inclusion in social accountability in the future.

The research team held a workshop in Dhaka to co-design the gender-transformative social accountability model. Participants of the workshop included SHOMOTA project staff and local government representatives; WVB CVA Focal Points; WVB sector advisors; gender and social inclusion specialists; two representatives of the Nobo Jatra Program, three UoR and one ISF-UTS researcher. The workshop included participatory processes to explore the appropriateness and relevance of the model to the context of the SHOMOTA project. Specific recommendations for gender and social inclusion and a deeper understanding of the barriers to implementation and how to overcome them emerged from the co-design workshop and informed the model.

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2 Winterford, K., Megaw, T., Gero, A. (2020) Literature review of gender-transformative change and social accountability. Gender-transformative social accountability - Working Paper 1. Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.

Inputs from the co-design workshop informed preparation of Guidance Notes for gender and social inclusion in CVA. These Guidance Notes were developed through a collaborative process of drafting by ISF-UTS and review by WVB and UoR. The Guidance Notes were informed by existing World Vision guidance for CVA. The Guidance Notes are aligned with standard practice of CVA, but strengthened with gender and social inclusion elements for implementation in SHOMOTA.

Learnings from the case study and co-design workshop were shared at a Sector Forum on gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH held in Dhaka. The Forum was attended by representatives from Government of Bangladesh, High Commission of Australia, civil society organisations, and World Vision Bangladesh. The Forum format allowed for presentations from the research team, a question and answer session, and small group discussions on thematic areas of gender-transformative social accountability. The Forum participants validated the research teams' proposed key elements of the gender-transformative social accountability model.

As part of preparing the gender-transformative social accountability model, the research team has considered complementary monitoring and evaluation components. UoR researchers have drafted an initial plan for 'stop-and-reflect' research activities with SHOMOTA staff and partners and CVA Working Group, to learn about initial start-up of the gender-transformative social accountability model and support continuous improvement of activity implementation. The research team is also drawing on existing gender-transformative change and social accountability literature and practice to define frameworks and methods for outcome assessment, and this learning has helped shape the gender-transformative social accountability model.

Co-design gender-transformative social accountability workshop group in Dhaka, Bangladesh in February 2020.

Overview of key concepts

There are several key concepts and terms relevant to gender-transformative social accountability model:

• Social accountability

• Gender-transformative change

• Approaches to gender programming

• Do no harm

• Intersectionality

• Social Inclusion

There is no singular definition of these key concepts, so this section clarifies the meaning of the concepts as we have used them in this Working Paper.

Social accountability

The term social accountability describes a broad range of citizen-led activities and initiatives to increase state accountability and improvements in delivery of public services.

Accountability in citizen-state relations can be described as vertical, horizontal and diagonal accountability. Vertical accountability refers to formal election of representatives by citizens participating in regular elections. Horizontal accountability refers to the internal oversight and checks and balances internal to government. Diagonal accountability blurs the distinction between these two types of accountability. Within diagonal accountability, citizens take on the attributes of the state in supervising the performance of state agencies directly, with the assumption that state agencies will be directly responsive to citizens (Sharma 2009). Diagonal accountability is central to how citizens influence change in social accountability.[3]

A central premise regarding how change happens in social accountability is that strengthening citizen voice will lead to increased state accountability. In fact, voice and accountability are mutually supporting: voice seeks to strengthen accountability, and accountability in turn strengthens voice as it demonstrates that voice can make a difference.[4] Social accountability efforts that seek to strengthen citizen voice focus on increasing access to information, strengthening the capacities of individuals to have a voice, and strengthening the political and legal frameworks through which their voices can be channeled and responded to.[5]

Citizen empowerment and participation are described as prerequisites for 'exercising voice and demanding accountability'.[6] It is through citizen empowerment in relation to the state and strengthened citizen voice that change is understood to happen within the practice of social accountability.

Obligation and answerability are part of accountability in citizen-state relations and central to social accountability approaches. The state is obligated to fulfil its legal commitments to provide services to citizens from public funding and must monitor quality of the services and provide answers to citizen questions and demands.

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3 Winterford, K., Megaw, T., Gero, A. (2020) Literature review of gender-transformative change and social accountability. Gender-transformative social accountability - Working Paper 1. Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.

4 Malena, C., Forster, R. & Singh, J. (2004) Social accountability: An introduction to the concept and emerging practice, Social Development Papers, Report Number 76, World Bank, Washington DC

5 Goetz, A.M. & Gaventa, J. (2001) Bringing citizen voice and client focus into service delivery, IDS Working Paper 138, Brighton, Sussex.

6 O'Neil, T., Foresti, M. & Hudson, A. (2007) Evaluation of citizens' voice and accountability: review of the literature and donor approaches, DFID, London.

Gender-transformative change

Definitions of 'gender-transformative' often describe a process, practice or approach to development, rather than clearly defined outcomes.

One view of a gender transformative approach is that change needs to take place and be sustained in the three domains of building agency of individuals, changing relations between them and transforming structures. A gender-transformative approach seeks to transform structures,[7] leading to a sustainable change in people's power and choices over their public and private lives,[8] in order to increase their ability to contribute equally to, and benefit equally from, social, political and economic development. Such an approach requires marginalised people to participate in decision-making processes and their voices heard and responded to.

There are multiple characteristics of gender-transformative change. Transformative change happens at multiple levels of society including household, community, organisations and groups, market, government. Change is a dynamic process influenced by a diverse set of actors, agencies and events.[9]

Gender-transformative change is recognised as a long-term and non-linear process, and some progress may be accompanied by setbacks in other domains.[10] Setbacks and slow progress may mean that strategies and indicators for gender transformative programming need to be revised.[11]

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7   CARE International (2018b), Gender Equality and Women's Voice Guidance Note.

8   DFID PPA Gender Learning Partnership, (2015) 'What works to achieve gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment?', p.3.

9   Hillenbrand E, Karim N, Mohanraj P, et al. (2015) Measuring gender-transformative change: A review of literature and promising practices.

10 Asian Development Bank, AusAID. (2013) Tool Kit on Gender Equality Results and Indicators, https://www.adb.org/documents/tool-kit-gender-equality-results-and-indicators, viewed 27 April 2018.

11 Gero, A., Winterford, K., Megaw, T., Kauhue, E. and Tangi, T. (2018). Beyond a token effort: Gender transformative climate change action in the Pacific. Development Bulletin.

Although the final outcome is unknown, gender-transformative programming can focus on achieving discrete results that are foundations to longer-term transformation of gender relations. Change can be both incremental and transformative, addressing immediate needs now and enabling gradual societal change.

Given the complexity of gender-transformative change and its interconnected characteristics, a systems approach is valuable for design and measurement of gender changes.[12] Robust processes to measure change are required to identify immediate and intermediate outcomes for women and SGM, of which there are a variety of models for measurement.[13] Outcomes should be realistic within the time frame of program and project cycles and the local context. When measuring these changes, it is valuable to gain a sense of the pathways of change and how these changes are experienced and influenced by diverse actors.[14] Within these pathways of change we can identify indicators that are 'stepping stones' to future and sustainable transformation of gender relations.[15]

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[12] Narayan D, ed. (2005). Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

[13] Winterford, K., Megaw, T., Gero, A. (2020) Literature review of gender-transformative change and social accountability. Gender-transformative social accountability - Working Paper 1. Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.

[14] Batliwala S. (2006) Measuring social change: Assumptions, myths and realities. Alliance 11(1):12–14.

[15] Asian Development Bank, AusAID. (2013). Tool Kit on Gender Equality Results and Indicators, https://www.adb.org/documents/tool-kit-gender-equality-results-and-indicators, viewed 27 April 2018, p.14.

Approaches to gender programming

Gender programming may be targeted at addressing practical or strategic gender needs, or both. Practical gender needs are those that have been identified by women in relation to their current socially-defined roles. Meeting practical needs might make women's lives easier but doesn't change their status in society. Strategic gender needs vary by context and are identified by women as a result of their lower social status. Meeting strategic needs tends to challenge gendered division of labour, power and control, as well as traditionally-defined norms and roles.[16]

Gender programming can be categorised in different ways and is often described on a continuum.[17] Gender-blind programs create, exacerbate or ignore gender inequalities in pursuit of program goals. Gender-sensitive programs may recognise existing inequities but may fail to actively transform gender norms and roles. Gender-specific programs support and improve outcomes for a specific gender group in pursuit of program goals, for example provide targeted trainings for women's empowerment. Gender-transformative programs aim to transform gender roles, norms and power relations to create more gender equitable outcomes and enhance achievement of program goals. Like gender specific programs, gender-transformative programs are inclusive of gender equity, in that they consider the needs of different groups, and adjust delivery of services so that all people benefit more equally.

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[16] Halcrow, G., Rowland, C., Willetts, J., Crawford, J. and Carrard, N. (2010) Resource Guide: Working effectively with women and men in water, sanitation and hygiene programs, International Women's Development Agency and Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, Australia.

[17] Vunisea, A., Leduc, B., Bernard, K., Duaibe, K., Cleary, L., Manley, M., Leavai, P. (2015) The Pacific Gender and Climate Change Toolkit: Tools for Practitioners, p.13.

Do no harm

A 'do no harm' approach is critical to gender-transformative programming. When challenging gender norms and entrenched power relations, backlash or violence towards women and girls is a risk in some contexts. There is also a risk that marginalised groups will be further stigmatised by inappropriate interventions. Unintended consequences may arise from gender programming such as including women in leadership roles may increase women's workload and burden.

Doing no harm requires an in-depth understanding of the complex dynamics of people's lives and having robust systems to monitor and assess unintended consequences. Regular monitoring of changes quickly surfaces any unintentional negative outcomes so that they can be addressed. Programs are planned recognising the consequences for all different groups in the community to ensure no harm in the process of gender-transformative change. It is important that underlying norms or attitudes that lead to exclusion are addressed so that promotion of gender-transformative change is supported by multiple actors in the community.

WASH training of a women's group, SHOMOTA project

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term used since the 1980s, with Crenshaw's definition in 1989 linked to multiple oppressions of racism and sexism experienced by black women in the USA.[18] We can use the tools of intersectionality to help illuminate the intersections between different identities of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, class, age, sexuality, rural/urban background and how these combine to constrain the rights of people. For example, women and girls with disabilities often experience double discrimination on the basis of gender and having a disability.

Recognising heterogeneity is critical to inform rights-based approaches within intersectionality. For example, treating all disabled women as one category doesn't account for their varied needs and lived experiences. Instead we consider the diversity of disabilities, their social contexts, and the fact that not all people with disabilities are equally disadvantaged.

Intersectional analysis aims to address the manner in which racism, patriarchy, classism, ableism (privileging able-bodied people) and other systems of oppression create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women and men.[19] One way to take an intersectional approach is to include perspectives of those who are multiply-marginalised in information gathering and decision-making.

18 Crenshaw, K. (1989) Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics.

19 Soeters, S., Grant, M., Carrard, N. and Willetts, J. (2019) "Intersectionality: ask the other question". Water for Women: Gender in WASH – Conversational article 2, Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.

A woman in a wheelchair washes her hands in a raised basin

Social Inclusion

All people, regardless of their abilities, gender identity, sexual orientation or health care needs, have the right to be respected as valuable members of their communities, however marginalising social forces jeopardise these rights in public and private spheres. During our co-design of the gender-transformative social accountability model, workshop participants in Dhaka noted that men in Bangladesh tend to receive more attention because they enact their citizenship in the public sphere, whereas women have more restricted mobility and enact their citizenship in the private sphere which is often ignored by decision-makers. They also noted that people with disabilities and other marginalised groups may experience discrimination or stigma, which coupled with scarcity of information or services, results in their needs being unmet.

Social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society – improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of those disadvantaged based on their identity. Considering equity is another aspect of social inclusion, that is delivering fair treatment according to individuals' specific needs so that they receive equal benefits and entitlements. Social inclusion measures include supporting development of skills and confidence among those likely to be excluded on the basis of their identity, to increase their ability to participate. Social inclusion also involves addressing attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers that hinder the participation of any disadvantaged individual or group on an equal basis with others.

An important element of social inclusion is to ensure accessibility for all. Accessibility is defined as: dignified access to all facilities, information, communications, technologies and systems, on an equal basis with or without disabilities.

World Vision Bangladesh

Government of Bangladesh provides infrastructure for WASH needs of people with disabilities

Introducing the gender-transformative social accountability model

Before we introduce the elements of the gender-transformative social accountability model, this section explains the rationale for integrating gender-transformative and social accountability approaches. It also outlines how aspects of both approaches are complementary to each other.

Why is gender-transformative social accountability needed?

Whilst social accountability is concerned with ensuring that poor and marginalised citizens express their voice for increased accountability, it is predominantly gender blind and often fails to consider and respond to all different types of marginalisation. Within current literature there is little consideration of the gendered nature of voice, accountability and empowerment. Although women are increasingly being given space to participate and voice their concerns, (and although women's practical interests may be met as a result of participating), whether having a voice within social accountability approaches advances women's strategic interests and leads to sustained transformative changes is less well explored.[20]

Our literature review of gender considerations in social accountability approaches identified limited attempts to consider a gender lens.[20] Bradshaw proposes initiatives to include women, for example: sex-aggregated data to make gender differences in priorities visible; establish quota systems; monitoring of women's attendance and voice; evaluating the outcomes of issues raised by women/around women's rights; and encourage governments to establish partnerships with women's movements and organisations.[21] These initiatives focus not only on immediate gender equality outcomes but also structural change, and are deserving of further research.

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20 Winterford, K., Megaw, T., Gero, A. (2020) Literature review of gender-transformative change and social accountability. Gender-transformative social accountability - Working Paper 1. Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.

21 Bradshaw, S. et al, 2016. Gender and Social Accountability: Ensuring Women's Inclusion in Citizen-led Accountability Programming Relating to Extractive Industries," Oxfam America Research Backgrounder series.

Every development program has a gendered outcome whether it be to exacerbate or maintain gender inequalities, or to actively challenge discrimination and structural barriers to gender equality. Many existing social accountability programs unintentionally exclude groups on the margins, for example people with physical disabilities who cannot attend public events due to mobility barriers. Social accountability programs need to be intentional in employing a gender-transformative and inclusive approach, through enhancing program outcomes with equal opportunity to participate in dialogue and decision-making, and equal realisation of benefits.

The next section explores in more detail how social accountability can be strengthened with gender-transformative and social inclusion perspectives.

How do social accountability and gender-transformative approaches complement each other?

A gender-transformative social accountability approach is concerned with realisation of rights for all. Whilst the notion of human rights is at the core of social accountability approaches, importantly these rights are not equally recognised, realised or respected by others. Lack of rights, marginalisation or discrimination in fact become the inhibitors to women and marginalised groups claiming their rights. With a gender-transformative approach, we recognise that some members of society have more advantages than others, and specific measures in social accountability are needed to ensure gender equity.

Changes in both the private and public spheres of society, and at multiple levels, are important considerations for gender-transformative social accountability. Social accountability generally focuses on advocacy within the public sphere (community and government institutions) and citizen-state relations. In addition to the public sphere, changes in the private sphere (values and relations in the household and family) should be part of gender-transformative social accountability. In the gender-transformative social accountability model, we view the household as a site for women's empowerment and dialogue between women and men as a change pathway for women's rights to be fulfilled in both private and public spheres.

Shifting mindsets of actors at multiple levels in social accountability processes is important to transform gender relations as well as accountability relations. That is, government representatives and service providers need to be aware of gender and social inclusion, as well as the relevant policies and standards, and change their attitudes in favour of transformative outcomes.

Gender-transformative social accountability goes beyond tokenistic inclusion of women, to a focus on transformative outcomes. Gender-transformative approaches encourage not only the opportunity for women and marginalised groups to voice their interests, but also a focus on creating conditions of mutual respect in which their voices are heard and responded to.[22] Within social accountability programming, increasing voice and participation of women is not enough. The priorities and strategies chosen should focus on transformative outcomes, such as changes in laws and practices that advance women's position in society and choices over their own lives.[23]

Notions of dialogue and 'inter-est' are also relevant to gender-transformative social accountability. Social accountability uses dialogue as a means of key stakeholders to learn from each other, identify common and distinct interests and work in a way that enables constructive exchange to strengthen delivery of basic services.[24] From a gender-transformative perspective, the notion of 'inter-est' provides the means to consider what lies between different groups, what could bind them together and in that process becoming visible to each other.[25] In the case of women and marginalised groups participating in social accountability, this notion of 'inter-est' prioritises efforts for their needs and interests to become more of concern to others, as other community members and duty bearers become interested in these issues.

22 Cornwall A. and Rivas, A. (2015) From 'gender equality and 'women's empowerment' to global justice: reclaiming a transformative agenda for gender and development, Third World Quarterly, 36:2, p.409.

23 Bradshaw, S. et al, (2016) Gender and Social Accountability: Ensuring Women's Inclusion in Citizen-led Accountability Programming Relating to Extractive Industries," Oxfam America Research Backgrounder series, p.9.

24 Winterford, K. (2013) A strengths perspective on social accountability: informing citizen and state action for improved services and development, UTS.

25 Cornwall A. and Rivas, A. (2015) From 'gender equality and 'women's empowerment' to global justice: reclaiming a transformative agenda for gender and development, Third World Quarterly, 36:2.
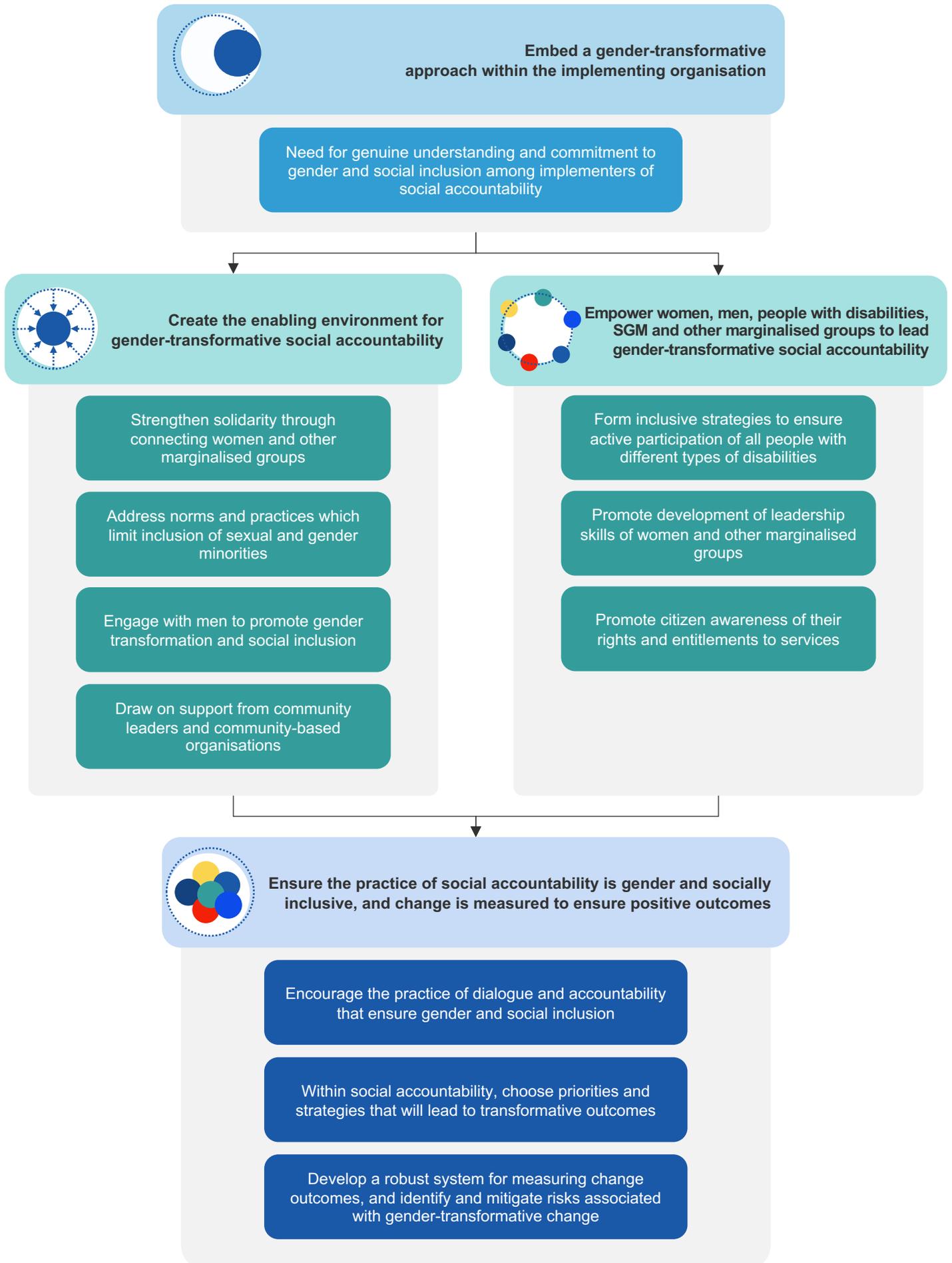
Female service users assessing the performance of service delivery in social accountability process, Bangladesh

Key elements of the gender-transformative social accountability model

There are twelve key elements to be considered when implementing a gender-transformative social accountability approach. These elements were informed by common themes emerging from our multiple research activities to date and confirmed by different stakeholder groups.

The figure below shows the key elements grouped into phases, starting with to embed a gender-transformative approach within the implementing organisation as a foundational step. The two phases of creating the enabling environment for gender-transformative social accountability and empowering of women, men, people with disabilities, SGM and other marginalised groups to lead gender-transformative social accountabilities can happen concurrently. The final phase is to ensure the practice of social accountability is gender and socially inclusive, and change is measured to ensure positive outcomes.

Gender-transformative social accountability model

Embed a gender-transformative approach within the implementing organisation

Need for genuine understanding and commitment to gender and social inclusion among implementers of social accountability

Create the enabling environment for gender-transformative social accountability

Strengthen solidarity through connecting women and other marginalised groups

Address norms and practices which limit inclusion of sexual and gender minorities

Engage with men to promote gender transformation and social inclusion

Draw on support from community leaders and community-based organisations

Empower women, men, people with disabilities, SGM and other marginalised groups to lead gender-transformative social accountability

Form inclusive strategies to ensure active participation of all people with different types of disabilities

Promote development of leadership skills of women and other marginalised groups

Promote citizen awareness of their rights and entitlements to services

Ensure the practice of social accountability is gender and socially inclusive, and change is measured to ensure positive outcomes

Encourage the practice of dialogue and accountability that ensure gender and social inclusion

Within social accountability, choose priorities and strategies that will lead to transformative outcomes

Develop a robust system for measuring change outcomes, and identify and mitigate risks associated with gender-transformative change

The key elements of gender-transformative social accountability are described in detail below.

A. Need for genuine understanding and commitment to gender and social inclusion among implementers

An appreciation for, genuine understanding and commitment to gender and social inclusion among implementers is a pre-requisite for gender-transformative change in social accountability. Social accountability initiatives have more potential of achieving equitable outcomes when their implementers are strong champions of gender-transformative change. Implementers with a vision of gender-transformation and understanding of gender and social inclusion concepts will be able to apply their awareness of gender to their local context and programming options.

For many implementers of social accountability, particularly those with a technical background, engaging with ideas of gender equality and social inclusion may be new. Awareness raising and training on gender and social inclusion will be important to uncover implementers' existing values and perspectives in relation to gender equality and inclusion, and to strengthen their motivation and capacity to advocate for and influence change. Creating a safe space for dialogue and regular self-reflection is important as individuals explore and challenge the norms, beliefs and practices that shape their lives. Training topics may include but are not limited to:

- Orientation to gender and social inclusion concepts
- Accessibility of information for people with various disabilities
- Guidance for removing barriers to equal participation and encouraging voice of women, the elderly, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups in social accountability activities
- Prevention and response to sexual harassment and violence, sexual exploitation and abuse of children and vulnerable adults, including using referral systems
- A gender and socially inclusive approach to dialogue between service users, service providers and other stakeholders.

Another way to build understanding is to conduct a gender and social assessment in the national and local context, as well as a policy assessment. Through a gender and social inclusion assessment systemic and structural inequalities that inhibit gender equality can be identified. This includes a review of both national policies and your organisation's policies, strategies or other programming plans to provide an understanding of current enablers and barriers to gender-transformation and social inclusion. Any aspects of an enabling environment, linkages or synergies

B. Strengthen solidarity through connecting women and other marginalised groups

Building networks and strengthening solidarity among women and other marginalised groups supports gender-transformative change. Connecting groups of women, sexual and gender minorities (SGM), ethnic minorities, people living with disabilities and youth within the local community and also to other communities provides an opportunity to share and learn together with people who have faced similar challenges in accessing their rights.

These relationships of solidarity can be strengthened in the following ways:

- Leverage existing community-based organisations, self-help and cooperatives/savings groups which focus on capacity development of women and disadvantaged groups

- Provide practical support to women and marginalised groups, such as providing telecommunications, transport and/or other logistics to connect with each other

- In addition to targeted trainings on social accountability, develop leadership skills and networks of women and marginalised groups through mentoring and engaging them in public relation activities such as acting as a moderator of events

- Consider organising exposure visits for women and disadvantaged groups enthusiastic and new to social accountability, to learn from other areas where these groups are playing a significant role, in order to build their skill and confidence to participate in social accountability activities.

This opportunity to share and build a common identity strengthens confidence and voice to advocate to government and decision-makers. Collective action in solidarity with others, provides the basis for effective dialogue with the government and service providers. Our research has found government representatives are more likely to listen to and respond.

C. Form inclusive strategies to ensure active participation of all people with different types of disabilities

Social accountability is strengthened by consideration of disability inclusion strategies across all its activities.

Within social accountability, the needs of people with various types of disability are often not specifically recognised. Considering the intersection of different forms of marginalisation from disability, gender, education, economic status and other factors will support a more nuanced understanding of varied needs and lived experiences of people within these marginalised groups. Strategies are needed in all types of social accountability activities to ensure inclusion and active participation of people living with a disability.

Strategies to address norms and harmful practices which limit inclusion of people living with disabilities include:

• Design appropriate communication mediums and channels for information to reach and be understood by people living with visual, hearing and mental disabilities

• Choose venues and environments for meetings that are accessible to different groups, considering people with mobility challenges who cannot enter multi-level buildings due to stairs and provide any required support to participate (eg. sign language interpreter)

• Identify existing policies and standards that support disability inclusion

• Create an enabling environment for participation through addressing discriminatory attitudes towards participation of people living with disabilities

• Promote the rights of people with disabilities to not only benefit from services, but also to have a voice to express their own interests and contribute in ways that are meaningful and empowering

• Support people living with disabilities to lead research designed to uncover a better understanding of their experiences, and utilise the research findings for inclusive programming

• Intentionally promote people living with a disability to decision-making and leadership roles, with appropriate support and mentoring.

D. Address norms and practices which limit inclusion of sexual and gender minorities

Social accountability activities that target the structural causes of gender equality should also aim to address norms and practices which limit inclusion of people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC). It is important to address discriminatory social norms such as heteronormativity which presumes all people should be heterosexual and excludes from social acceptance and opportunities lesbian, gay, bisexual and other sexual minorities, and excludes gender identity and expression outside of male and female because it relies on the norm of gender binaries.[26] In some contexts, sexual and gender minorities (SGM) may experience less acceptance in their community and not be accustomed to participating in community events and meetings. Social accountability is an approach to include marginalised groups such as these in decision-making, while taking care to not create any harm or backlash to participants.

There are several international human rights instruments that protect the rights of SGM in development and can be employed in social accountability, such as the Yogyakarta Principles. For example, of relevance to social accountability for WASH services is the Yogyakarta Principle 35 which states that "everyone has the right to equitable, adequate, safe and secure sanitation and hygiene, in circumstances that are consistent with human dignity, without discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics".[27] In community-based organisations that promote a rights-based approach to development, promoting inclusion of SGM is an important step in achieving fulfilment of rights and inclusion of everyone.

As SGM include marginalised and vulnerable people, it is important to promote inclusion in a way that foremost protects their safety and wellbeing. Preparation for social accountability activities should include specific training in SOGIESC issues and development of a risk management plan for inclusion of SGM. Implementers of social accountability may seek advice and support from technical experts who are appropriately qualified and experienced in working with SGM during social accountability implementation and monitoring and evaluation.[28]

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26 Edge Effect (2018) SGM in Development and WASH Workbook, prepared for 'Water for Women: Sexual and Gender Minorities in Development and WASH Programs' workshop with Plan International 9 August 2018, p. 10.

27 International Drafting Committee for the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 (2018) The Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10: Additional Principles and State Obligations on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics, to Complement the Yogyakarta Principles, Meeting of Experts in Geneva.

28 Edge Effect (2018) SGM inclusion scorecard, prepared for 'Water for Women: Sexual and Gender Minorities in Development and WASH Programs' workshop with Plan International 9 August 2018.

E. Engage with men to promote gender transformation and social inclusion

Male engagement and male support for gender and social inclusion outcomes is essential, especially in patriarchal societies. An enabling environment for women's empowerment and gender equality is critical in the household and at the community level. Positive attitudes and support from male spouses, fathers and community leaders is often described as necessary to enable women's active participation.[29]

Especially within the context of social accountability, promoting the shared interests of men and women, and encouraging men to value women's empowerment and women's leadership, will support gender-transformative outcomes. In contexts where only women are invited to join "gender trainings", their knowledge of their rights and self-confidence may increase to the point they challenge the status quo, but if this is not accompanied by changes in men's attitudes then women may face backlash.

In social accountability, men might be engaged through specific training and orientation on gender and social inclusion issues. For example, role play methods might be used to encourage men to reflect on gender roles and responsibilities in the household and the community, and to encourage inclusive leadership and decision-making. Another approach is to identify male champions who demonstrate appreciation of and commitment to gender equality and empowerment of marginalised groups, and encourage them to promote these ideas to their male peers.

29 Winterford, K., Panday, P.K., Baroi, H.S., Ahsan, A.H.M.K. Megaw, T., Willetts, J. (2020). Learning Report from the Nobo Jatra Program: Gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH. Prepared for World Vision Bangladesh, p. 14.

Roleplay of male engagement in Citizen Voice and Action, Co-Design of GTSA Workshop for SHOMOTA

F. Draw on support from community leaders and community-based organisations

For gender-transformative social accountability to be effective it is important to get local support and commitment for rights and participation of citizens, especially from local community leaders. This is in recognition that gender-transformative change is part of broad societal long-term change which involves all different types of individuals and groups in society. Women; youth; illiterate citizens; ethnic monitories; SGM; and people living with a disability sometimes experience social exclusion. It is likely that in social accountability activities it is the first time some of these individuals are being invited to participate in public life, and there may be prejudices or resistance to overcome. Another barrier to participation is restriction of women's mobility for religious or cultural reasons. Reducing these barriers to participate is important for gender-transformative change.

Involving community leaders such as teachers or religious leaders from the outset, can assist in building a safe enabling environment in which to implement a gender-transformative social accountability approach. If not fully informed, it is possible for these leaders to perceive social accountability as a threatening process which aims to disrupt community norms. Identify community leaders and local community-based organisations who have roles, responsibility, leadership and legitimacy in the community. This process might identify elected officials, government workers, religious leaders, in-formal leaders such as elders, or very active and influential people in the community. Hold meetings or workshops with these leaders to promote citizen rights and gender and social inclusion, and promote their active role in the community to support gender-transformative social accountability. It is important that these leaders should view social accountability as a positive process that will support everyone's wellbeing and social justice outcomes in the community.

Through identifying community-based organisations and self-help groups which are representatives and allies of women or other marginalised groups, we can draw on their support and ensure social accountability activities contribute to their ongoing work. If appropriate, partner with these local organisations and groups to carry out awareness-raising on citizen rights and gender and social inclusion in the community.

G. Promote development of leadership skills of women and other marginalised groups

Given that women and other marginalised groups have particular disadvantages and barriers to participating in social accountability activities, efforts are required to prepare and support their participation in addition to creating an enabling environment. It might be the first time that many individuals have been part of a public dialogue process with government officials, and speaking about their rights and needs in front of an audience might be daunting. Recognising the challenges women and marginalised groups face, it is important to build their skills and confidence so that they can actively participate. Citizen education and mobilisation are ongoing processes throughout social accountability, so activities which build capacity and confidence in the long-term need to be sustained.

The best way to engage and mobilise women, men, SGM, youth, and elderly people will be different, so engagement strategies tailored to these specific groups is required. Support these groups with activities to build their skills, confidence and interest to participate in social accountability, such as:

- Build awareness of social accountability activities and opportunities to participate through social media; posters/notice boards at schools, hospital and other public facilities; and community meetings

- Identify and address particular training needs to increase their leadership capacity e.g. public speaking training for women

- Draw on available skills and knowledge of implementers to ensure materials and facilitation methods are inclusive

- Key messages should be tailored to different audience groups.

Prior to whole-of-community gatherings, we recommend holding separate meetings with specific marginalised groups, so that each group has their own safe space in which to learn skills and build their confidence for participation. Building individual agency and relationships of solidarity within these groups will contribute positively to gender-transformative change.

H. Promote citizen awareness of their rights and entitlements to services

Government policies and standards of service delivery are the basis of legitimacy for social accountability activities and advocacy. Where relevant government policies and standards are inclusive of gender or social inclusion provisions, these can be advocated for as part of social accountability. Where policies or standards are discriminatory, policy and advocacy efforts can be mobilised to create change towards stronger focus on gender and social inclusion within government policies and standards.

It is important for implementers to define which standards or entitlements are relevant to the service that is to be monitored, and analyse to what extent the standards address the needs and rights of different groups in the community. Women, men and marginalised groups in the community have different needs and interests which are often addressed by different standards of services. For example, schools often have gender disaggregated standards for separate girls' and boys' toilets. Also consider whether there are any provisions for social inclusion in the government standards. For example, disability access at health centres through standard construction of ramps at health centres. Be sure to review government policy relevant to gender and social inclusion as well as government policy and standards relevant to the service that is to be monitored. Describe the service standards, including gender disaggregated standards and social inclusion provisions in a simple document or flyer to use in citizen education activities.

Building awareness of citizens on their rights and government service standards will support their involvement in social accountability. Citizens should be provided with information and training on their rights and obligations of duty bearers. For example, knowing that local government budget is available for public sanitation facilities will support citizens to advocate for accessible toilets to be built by the local government. Knowing their rights and entitlements will prepare citizens to lead advocacy and engage in dialogue on public policies and services with government representatives and service providers, aware of gender and social inclusion.

I. Sensitise local government and service providers on gender and social inclusion

Strengthening relationships between government and citizens is a core feature of social accountability and ensuring willingness of government officials to participate is essential. Importantly within a gender-transformative social accountability approach, ensuring that local government and service providers are motivated and committed to gender equality and social inclusion is important so that everyone in the community can have an equal opportunity to actively participate and benefit in social accountability activities.

In order to create an enabling environment and momentum for gender-transformative change, it is important to build rapport and provide an orientation to local government and service providers on concepts of social accountability and gender and social inclusion. Changes in their perceptions, attitudes and institutional norms is vital in creating structural long-term change. Through the orientation process it is important to build favourable relationships and partnership with local government and service providers and create a safe space for the participation of women and marginalised groups.

In some contexts, it may be important to establish legitimacy of social accountability citizen groups in the eyes of government. This legitimacy could be gained through registering as a formal community group or establishing a MoU with the local government representative, which also promotes sustainability of social accountability practices and responsiveness of government.

Engagement of government officials in CVA to improve service delivery, Nobo Jatra programme

J. Encourage the practice of dialogue and accountability that ensure gender and social inclusion

As described earlier, the practice of dialogue between stakeholders is core to social accountability. Encouraging regular practice of dialogue between citizens, service providers and government elected officials will support transformative change, as new types of roles, behaviours and attitudes become the norm.

At social accountability community meetings, it is important to have the presence of all stakeholders, including men, women, youth, people living with disability, marginalised groups, service providers and local government representatives. A safe space should be created for each individual to voice their views, be heard by others and responded to.

The dialogue spaces may need to be mediated to ensure that marginalised groups are active in participating and decision-making, and not interrupted or dominated by others. Navigate tension over sensitive issues and deeply held beliefs, by using probing questions to prompt critical thinking and challenge any discriminatory beliefs or oppressive behaviours.

It is valuable to promote dialogue and relationship building between different groups in the community in order to surface shared interest and common objectives. Interactions and relationships formed within social accountability activities can support ongoing work and collaboration within the community. Dialogue and relationship building can also support strengthened gender and social inclusion and sustained gender-transformative change.

K. Within social accountability, choose priorities and strategies that will lead to transformative outcomes

During the process of dialogue, many different types of actions may be proposed to improve access to and delivery of services meet the monitoring standards and not all will be prioritised. It is important to promote consideration of all different types of proposed actions and facilitate discussion on why proposals are chosen or not chosen. In a gender-transformative social accountability approach, the proposed actions should promote equity and benefit to those who are often marginalised or disadvantaged such as women, people with disability, youth or other minority groups in the community.

Ideally actions planned for advocacy activities should not only address practical needs for government services, but also address strategic needs to transform gender relations, roles and institutions. For example, aim for structural changes such as amending or creating legislation or introducing quotas for representation in government consultations which will have a sustained, long-term impact and advance the position of women, people with disabilities and other minority groups in society.

It is also important to include women and marginalised groups in monitoring, together with men, to ensure actions agreed to are fulfilled. Often actions initiated by marginalised or disadvantaged groups are not prioritised by others and promises to improve services are not delivered. Assessing the extent to which gender and social inclusion outcomes are achieved through the delivery of the actions provides an important test of how inclusive the social accountability process has been.

World Vision Bangladesh

Interface meeting in Citizen Voice and Action social accountability process

L. Develop a robust system for measuring change outcomes, and identify and mitigate risks associated with gender-transformative change

As described earlier, gender-transformative change is a non-linear process so change outcomes are not known at the outset of social accountability activities. Implementers need to develop a system to measure immediate and intermediate gender and social inclusion changes and social accountability outcomes. For example, monitoring to record improvement in health or education services, construction or upgrades to WASH infrastructure, toilets accessible to people living with disabilities, clean and safe water is located closer to houses so women's burden in collecting water is reduced.

Implementers also need processes to identify locally-defined indicators that are 'stepping stones' to future and sustainable transformation of gender relations. A qualitative assessment is most effective to explore how and why gender-transformative change has or has not happened. Through the assessment, risks to women or marginalised groups' active participation and empowerment can be identified and mitigation strategies decided for ongoing implementation, ensuring that unintended consequences or backlash are minimised.

Gender-transformative social accountability in context

The key elements provide guidance or ideals regarding the implementation of a gender-transformative social accountability model. However as the concept of gender is mediated through social norms and practices, gender-transformative change should be viewed in relation to local culture and the model adapted to the needs of each context.

As described earlier, conducting a detailed gender and social assessment in the national and local context can support learning about gender-transformative change. Through this assessment systemic and structural inequalities that inhibit gender equality can be identified and addressed.

In this section we provide some examples of the barriers and opportunities for gender-transformative social accountability in Bangladesh. Through the process of identifying barriers and enablers, the SHOMOTA team became more aware of the context they were working in, which in turn informed their overall strategy to gender-transformative social accountability.

Barriers	Enablers
• Low involvement in decision-making at the household level and high workload of women as a caregiver	• Increased literacy rates and numbers of women educated
• Restricted mobility of women (not allowed to travel without male company and/or not having travel budgets)	• Increased numbers of women taking on paid professional roles and/or responsibility in government
• Limited access of women to government officials due to social norms	• Increased accountability through improved awareness of women, and increased demands for women's rights
• Low numbers of women in decision-making roles	• National Women's Development Policy and National Health Policy (2011)
• High prevalence of violence against women	• Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act (2013)
• Religious institutions that perpetuate discriminatory social norms	• Government and INGO resources to address gender and social inclusion issues

Next steps in our research and future considerations

For the next phase of the Gender-transformative Social Accountability in Inclusive WASH project, we are leading reflective research on gender-transformative social accountability in implementation of CVA in the SHOMOTA project. Monitoring of incremental changes will be carried out by UoR researchers to support CVA implementation. The research team will also undertake an outcome assessment towards the end of the research award (2021), and the learning will support refinement of the gender-transformative social accountability model.

There are some areas of interest that we are seeking to explore in piloting gender-transformative social accountability practice. Will the change pathways we identified and GTSA elements being implemented in SHOMOTA demonstrate transformative change outcomes? We are interested in learning if elements of the model successfully create an enabling environment for change. These elements include: building strong understanding and commitment of implementers; of engaging local leaders and male spouses; sensitisation of service providers and officials to gender-transformative social accountability approaches; and encouraging the practice of dialogue.

Our research will explore if implementing elements of the model can achieve strengthened voice and empowerment of women and marginalised groups participating in social accountability initiatives. These elements include building solidarity of women and marginalised groups; addressing practices which limit inclusion of SGM and people living with disabilities; promoting skill development and awareness of rights. And importantly, we will investigate if increased voice and dialogue will lead to accountability of government representatives and service providers, including enhanced transparency and responsiveness.

Another area of inquiry is how gender-transformative change in social accountability can be measured in implementation of monitoring and evaluative research. We are interested in identifying options for measuring change in gender-transformative social accountability, both incremental and transformative. It will be valuable to consider what measures are practical and feasible to monitor within a project cycle such as SHOMOTA. It will also be interesting to uncover particular 'stepping stones' that indicate future, transformative change.

Research will also consider the role of context in shaping gender-transformative social accountability outcomes. Specifically in our current context, it is relevant to inquire how COVID-19 may affect potential outcomes. Social distancing requirements and lockdown arrangements have caused delays in training implementers and community mobilisation activities for SHOMOTA, but we haven't yet seen the full effects of COVID-19 on gender relations and also government accountability.

More generally, we might explore the role of social, cultural and political dimensions of context in shaping outcomes. SHOMOTA project sites are located in socially conservative districts of Gaibanda, Jamalpur and Satkhira, where patriarchal norms and structures will need significant efforts to transform to achieve gender equality outcomes. Further research might apply the gender-transformative social accountability model to different country contexts and compare change pathways and outcomes of gender and social inclusion.

Conclusion

This Working Paper on a gender-transformative social accountability model to be implemented by SHOMOTA Project is intended for multiple audiences of civil society organisations, government and donors working on or funding social accountability initiatives. We have shared insights with you, as practitioners and policy-makers, on how social accountability practices in international development could be strengthened to support outcomes for gender-transformative change and social inclusion.

Whilst social accountability is concerned with participation of poor and marginalised citizens, current practice is predominantly gender-blind and often fails to consider and respond to all different types of marginalisation. It is important to recognise every development program has a gendered outcome whether it be to exacerbate or maintain the status-quo of gender relations, or to actively challenge discrimination and structural barriers to gender equality.

In this Working Paper we have considered the complementary nature of social accountability and gender-transformative change, noting that between them is a shared agenda for realisation of rights and transformative change. The gender-transformative approach recognises that men generally receive more advantages and privileges than women, and specific measures in social accountability are needed to ensure gender equity. We apply an intersectional approach to gender, as not all within a marginalised group are equally marginalised, and we need to uncover varied needs and lived experiences so that social accountability initiatives are designed appropriately. Changes in both the private and public spheres of society, and at multiple levels, are important considerations for gender-transformative social accountability.
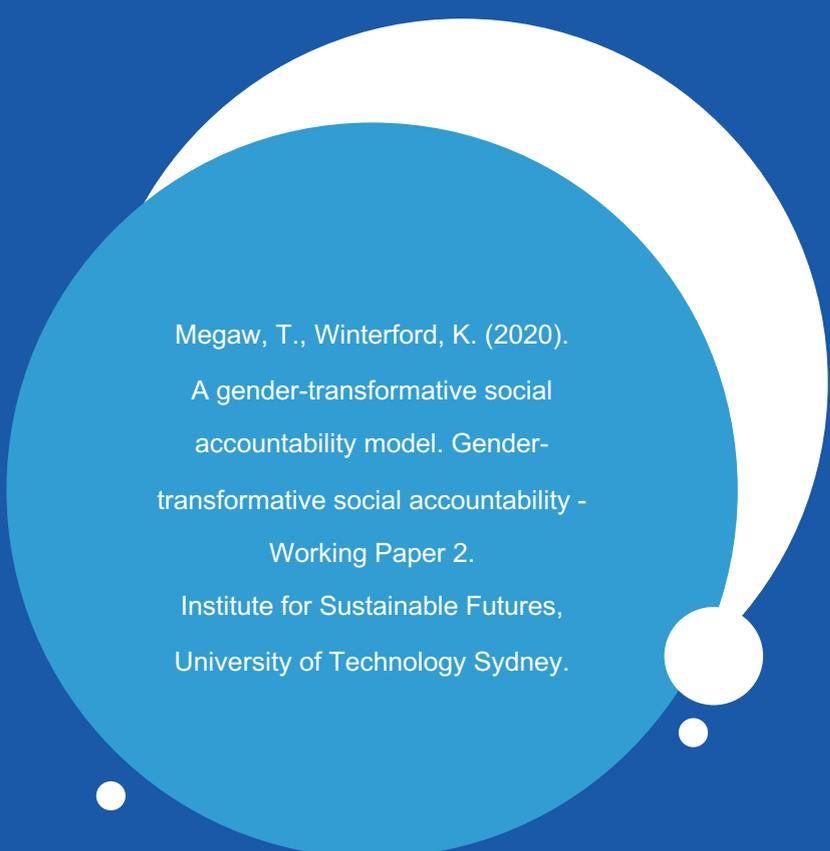
The key elements this gender-transformative social accountability model offers can be used to inform the design and practice of new social accountability approaches. The elements may also be used to assess the extent to which gender and social inclusion considerations are included in existing social accountability approaches.

In informing practice, the key elements of gender-transformative social accountability can be applied in your social accountability initiatives in several ways. Embedding a gender-transformative approach within your organisation is a foundational step, as genuine understanding and commitment to gender and social inclusion among implementers is a pre-requisite for building momentum for change.

Preparatory work at the community level is needed to enable equal participation in social accountability initiatives. Social accountability activities should encourage a broad commitment to gender and social inclusion from all those involved – including male spouses, community and religious leaders, service providers and government representatives - to create an enabling environment for gender-transformative change and ensure that all voices are equally heard and responded to. Specific activities and strategies are encouraged to empower women, men, people with disabilities, SGM and other marginalised groups to take the role of leaders in gender-transformative social accountability.

The practice of dialogue and accountability should be facilitated to lead to gender and socially-inclusive outcomes. Citizen-state engagement must go beyond increasing voice and participation of women and marginalised groups, to decision-making and prioritisation of women's strategic interests. This Working Paper also recommended development of a robust system for measuring change outcomes, to surface and mitigate against any unintentional negative outcomes of social accountability initiatives, as well as identify and strengthen positive outcomes.

We look forward to receiving feedback on this Working Paper, for refinement of our gender-transformative social accountability model in continued conversation with the development sector. We will share further insights from the ongoing research in the next phases of our Gender-transformative Social Accountability in Inclusive WASH project. We also look forward to learning about your experience of putting aspects of the gender-transformative social accountability model into practice within your own programs and policies.

Megaw, T., Winterford, K. (2020).

A gender-transformative social

accountability model. Gender-

transformative social accountability -

Working Paper 2.

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